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STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL/AWH

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)  
SUBJECT: Anti-Olympics Blogger Arrested

Ref: HCMC 235

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Reports from friends and colleagues indicate that Hoang Hai (AKA prominent blogger "Dieu Cay" has been arrested. After reportedly hiding out for about a month, the police located and arrested Hai in central city of Da Lat over the weekend of April 19-20. While the specific reason for his arrest is unclear, his arrest appears to have been precipitated by his participation in a January 19 protest against the Olympics and the threat of disruption of the Olympic torch relay in Ho Chi Minh City scheduled for April 29 rather than by his blog directly. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Hai is a member of a new, young dissident group, the pro-democracy Freelance Journalist Club, and was one of the organizers of an unauthorized January 19, 2008, protest against the Olympics in Beijing. During that event, held on the steps of the Opera House in central Ho Chi City, Hai and others held up several banners calling for a boycott of the Beijing Olympics, including one with the now-familiar image of the Olympic rings represented by handcuffs. Immediately after participating in the anti-Olympics protest, Hai faced intense police harassment -- police reportedly barred multiple land owners from leasing property to the small business that Hai owns. In addition, the police called him in for "working sessions" at least nine times following the January protest action.

¶3. (SBU) Since then, roughly half of Dieu Cay's blog entries target the Beijing Olympics. While most entries cite the same human rights concerns being echoed by groups around the world, other entries reflect a purely Vietnamese angle, focusing on the ongoing dispute with China over the Spratley and Paracel Islands. Hai's role in this dispute includes taking part in a recent blog campaign to protest China's reported intention to incorporate the disputed Spratly and Paracel Islands into Chinese administrative control. Hai approaches the human rights situation in China in graphic terms -- the background to his blog page is a five-panel cartoon strip depicting the official logo of the Beijing Olympics being formed from blood splattered as a man is executed by firing squad. His more recent blog entries focus on the ongoing unrest in Tibet, with China's actions in Tibet being the topic of his last entry, dated April 16.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: While Hai is extraordinarily outspoken on his blog on human rights, democracy, and corruption in Vietnam, he was likely detained as part of a security sweep to ensure that the April 29 Olympic torch relay in Ho Chi Minh City will go off without a hitch. Following well-reported actions against the torch relay in Paris and elsewhere, Prime Minister Dung announced that no disruptions would be tolerated in Vietnam. Given Hai's particularly active campaign against the upcoming Beijing Olympics over the past several months, authorities appear to be concerned that he plans to organize protestors to disrupt the torch procession. Whatever the motivation, the arrest of a blogger is a matter of particular concern given the important and rapidly growing role that blogs play in expanding the scope of civil discourse in Vietnam (reftel). End Comment.

¶5. (U) Dieu Cay's blog is available (in Vietnamese only) at the "Yahoo 360" web site at the following address:  
[http://blog.360.yahoo.com/  
blog-Fqy69mcyequwJv.MxrhJO\\_sXCZbkCw--?cq=1](http://blog.360.yahoo.com/blog-Fqy69mcyequwJv.MxrhJO_sXCZbkCw--?cq=1).

¶6. This cable was coordinated with the Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City.

MICHALAK